

A response to Frigga Haug's Call for Left feminist Projects

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Any left feminist project today must face the dismantling of the welfare state in the global North and the dismantling of the possibility of the welfare state in the global South. Changing state-formation by armed struggle can no longer be the primary mode of left politics. With outsourcing in full force as a result of the division of the world into a global South and the global North, and because of long entrenched gender bias, job-security based union politics can also not be the primary locus of feminist work on the left. The only way to fight globalization is to realize that capital must be generated equitably and turned around to social uses—socialism as welfare. (We are not in a post-state world.) The structure of the welfare state envisaged by feminism must incorporate all the struggles for preserving gender equality and gender difference as they have been negotiated in the past; and must fight fascism and nationalism, often based on destructive gender ideology. It must ignore artificial political frontiers and work regionally. If it is to be a left project, it cannot be satisfied with the alliance between the radicals in the global North and feudal ideological elements in the global South, strongly reliant on corporate funding. This alliance emphasizes the social productivity of capital, while at the same time completely ignoring the destructive activities of capitalism as we witness them everyday.

If we want to start this work right away, we must engage in some degree of vanguardism, as the left has always been obliged to do - because of very strong opposition from the most powerful sections of geopolitics. To supplement this vanguardism, left feminists must also engage in a broad grassroots epistemological activism, preparing gendered minds for access to the public sphere by contributing time and skill, learning from the historical and cultural situation at the bottom rather than approaching the problem with the conviction of superior knowledge.

The role of deep language learning is important here, not only to access cultural infrastructure in order to make epistemological change, but also if we are to understand the place of pleasure and violence in the field of sexual difference and gendering, which cannot be captured in the juridico-legal structure of welfare, but must touch areas of our being that are not governed by reason alone. Just as ecological workers cannot sacrifice biodiversity to a few broad monocultures, so must feminist epistemological and political workers not sacrifice linguistic diversity to a few important languages.

We must be very careful about using the *Internet*. It is an instrument of great convenience and must certainly be used for practical purposes. On the other hand, unmediated cyber literacy cannot make for a gender just world. Access to the *Internet* must be accompanied by ethical and epistemological training against the convenience of mere capitalism. Also, because the imagination ultimately escapes the conventions of the *Internet*, we cannot rely on the *Net* for genuinely substantive networking. I see a great deal of gender-Internet material everyday and see how it continues to substitute organizing for changing the world and how uncritically vanguardist it remains.

I am not good at making generalizations about activism because I think work is textual in its being-work, in its working. I will therefore close here and continue with the hands-on work that I have been doing for the last 20 years, which, because it requires both the ability to learn from below and deep language learning, does not draw as many recruits as I would like. I am happy that Frigga has asked us to speak out and I hope to remain in solidarity with this group.

Upstream from the difference between left and right is the importance of understanding gender justice within the ambiguities of reproductive heteronormativity. That is material for discussion rather than for inclusion as a paragraph in a short statement. □□□